

# hungry host

Thesis Outline  
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"I haven't got several identities: I've got just one, made up of many components combined together in a mixture that is unique to every individual."

**Malouf 2000**

"there is a strong effort to deny that we humans are also animals positioned in the food chain."

**Plumwood 2009**

# I. INTRO

## 1.1 Background

Can we speak of diasporic hunger? I have a theory that my people – displaced Jews across the world with multiple national identities – eat not just to live but to fill a void. Eating food with kin can be a full-body experience. It is a layered communal ritual; we are immersed collectively in a thick, fatty vacuum. When a people are displaced, what cultural ingredients can be mobilized and taken along for the journey? Recipes can be stored in muscle memory and replicated just about anywhere.

The power-dynamic inherent to feeding is a suitable metaphor when analyzing the diasporic experience. How does a host culture feed on its alien subjects? And reciprocally, how does the host feed its new subjects? How does the outsider assimilate or mutate to adapt to the new environment? With these cursory questions my interest in the overlap between science-fiction and the diasporic experience rises to the surface. Can feeding as a metaphor connect otherness and science fiction? So often the alien, the outsider, is perceived as a threat through a paranoid gaze. What if this intelligent life form was more interested in collaboration than devouring humanity?

Through my thesis and project *hungry host*, I aim to explore these questions and substantiate my sci-fi worldmaking with personal material. How might personal histories be channeled into new forms of sci-fi cinema? These are questions I'm exploring through artistic research with a view to create a film installation and thesis.

## 1.2 Thesis Format

This thesis will employ multiple registers and writing techniques to make a layered text that is hybrid in form, just like the mongrel nature of diasporic identity and the main themes of *hungry host*. The body of the thesis will consist of theoretical discussions, a comparative analysis of sci-fi novels, as well as a chapter of sci-fi film critique. The findings will lead to a manifesto or *hungry dogme* which outlines practical principles to guide a vision for a diasporic sci-fi cinema, a sci-fi that deals with otherness in response to displacement. The *hungry dogme* is finally used to produce a screenplay which is inserted in the prologue.

## 1.2 Thesis Statement

Science fiction's concern with the encounter between humans and other life forms significantly overlaps with the diasporic experience, where a host culture encounters the Other. Critical analysis and discussion of key sci-fi texts, novels, and films in relation to outsider syndrome, will help formulate the *hungry dogme*, a manifesto for creating contemporary diasporic sci-fi cinema.

## II. MAIN BODY

### 2.1 Auto-Theoretical Discussion

- Analysis and discussion of *hungry* essays and academic texts in relation to autobiographical material. Formulating a theoretical foundation which addresses the overlap between science fiction and displacement.
- Key concepts: human prey, diasporic void, alienation, assimilation, acculturation, escapism.
- Texts: Plumwood (1995) *Human Vulnerability and the Experience of Being Prey*; Maalouf (2000) *On Identity*; Kershenbaum (2021) *The Zoologist's Guide to the Galaxy*; Haraway (1985) *A Cyborg Manifesto*; Kolk (2014) *The Body Keeps the Score*; Le Guin (1988) *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*.

### 2.2 Comparative Literature

- Comparative discussion on the content and technique of 2-3 key sci-fi novels that respond to *hungry host*.
- The novel as a carrier bag for sci-fi with its limitless worldbuilding potential.
- Novels: Le Guin (1966) *Planet of Exile*; Butler (1980) *Wild Seed*; Pinsker (2019) *Song for a New Day*; Lem (1961) *Solaris*; Strugatsky (1971) *Roadside Picnic*; Herbert (1985) *Chapterhouse Dune*.

### 2.3 Film Critique

- Notes on filmmaking constraints and how visual artists navigate sci-fi through limited means and poetic gestures, as opposed to big-budget Hollywood epics like *2001: A Space Odyssey* or Jordan Peele's recent sci-fi Western *Nope*.
- Discussion of key contemporary and 20<sup>th</sup> century sci-fi films and artworks that respond to *hungry host*.

- Films: *Nope* (2022) dir. Jordan Peele; *Teknolust* (2002) dir. Lynn Hershman Leeson; *Journey to the Moon* (2009) Kutlag Ataman; *Outer Space* (1999) dir. Peter Tscherkassky; *Space is the Place* (1974) dir. John Coney; *Solaris* (1972) dir. Andrei Tarkovsky.

## III. CONCLUSION

### 3.1 Hungry Dogme

- Detailing key findings and unresolved problematics
- Towards a diasporic sci-fi cinema.
- Stating a *hungry dogme* or manifesto for creating diasporic sci-fi cinema.

## IV. PROLOGUE

### 4.1 Hungry Screenplay

- A screenplay for a speculative fiction that puts into practice the knowledge and discoveries contained in the thesis and the *hungry dogme*.

## V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Text

Deleuze, G (1989) *Cinema 2: The Time Image*. Tomlinson, H & R Galeta (Trans). University of Minnesota Press.

Haraway, D. J. (1985) *A Cyborg Manifesto*. Duke University Press.

Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble*. Duke University Press.

Kershenbaum, A (2021) *The Zoologist's Guide to the Galaxy: What Animals on Earth Reveal About Aliens — and Ourselves*.

Kolk, B (2014) *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*. Penguin, London.

Le Guin, U (1988) *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*. TJ Books Ltd, UK

Maalouf, A (2000) *On Identity*, trans. B Bray, The Harvill Press, London.

Plumwood, V (1995) *Human Vulnerability and the Experience of Being Prey*. *Quadrant*, 39(3), 29–34 .

### Film

*Eraserhead* (1977) dir. Lynch, D. 1 Channel Film, Stereo soundtrack, 01:29:00 duration, Libra Films, United States.

*HyperNormalisation* (2016) dir. Curtis, A. 1 channel film, Stereo soundtrack, 02:46:00 duration, BBC Films, United Kingdom.

*Nope* (2022) dir. Peele, J. 1 channel film, Stereo soundtrack, 02:10:00 duration, Universal Pictures, United States

*Pulse* (2001) dir. Kurosawa, K. 1 Channel Film, Stereo soundtrack, 01:19:00 duration, Toho, Japan.

*Sans Soleil* (1983) Marker, C. 1 Channel Film, Stereo soundtrack, 01:40:00 duration, Argos Films, France.

*Space is the Place* (1974) dir. John Coney. 1 Channel Film, Stereo soundtrack, 01:25:00 duration, United States.

*Teknolust* (2002) dir. Lynn Hershman Leeson. 1 Channel Film, Stereo Soundtrack, 01:25:00 duration, Velocity Entertainment, United States.

*Titane* (2021) dir. Ducournau, J. 1 channel film, Stereo soundtrack, 01:48:00 duration, Diaphana Distribution, France.

*Videodrome* (1983) dir. Cronenberg, D. 1 channel film, Stereo soundtrack, 01:29:00 duration, Universal Pictures, Canada.

## Artworks

*First Person Plural, The Electronic Diaries Of Lynn Hershman Leeson 1984-1996* (1995) dir. Leeson, L.H. 1 channel film, Stereo soundtrack, 01:15:00 duration, Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Germany

*I turn over the pictures of my voice in my head* (2009) dir. Export, V. 1 channel film, Stereo Soundtrack, 12:00 duration, Austria

*La Jetee* (1962) dir. Marker, C. 1 channel film, Stereo soundtrack, 00:28:00 duration, Argos Films, France.

*Journey to the Moon* (2009) Ataman, K. 1 channel fiilm, Stereo soundtrack, stereo soundtrack, 01:19:00 duration, Turkey.

*Love in the Message, The Message is Death* (2016) Jafa, A. 1 channel video installation, stereo soundtrack, 00:08:00 duration. Exhibited Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago & the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2018).